

Dear members of the Education Committee,

My name is Camila Bortolletto. I am a resident of Brookfield, CT and am in support of H.B. 6663 An Act Establishing the English Learners Bill of Rights.

Currently, there are more than 45,000 English Language Learners in Connecticut, however, ELL student performance is significantly lower across the board than non-ELL students. Due to the lack of qualified interpreters/interpretation resources, parents cannot be informed about their child's progress in school.

I am the Co-Executive Director of CT Students for a Dream (C4D). C4D is a statewide, youth-led network that fights for the rights of undocumented immigrant youth and their families. But today I am speaking from my personal perspective, I was an ESL student myself, my family and I came from Brazil to Danbury, Connecticut when I was 9 years old. I spent 2 years in my elementary school ESL program before joining non-ESL classes and curriculum. My parents did not know how the American school system worked and there was no one at the school able to guide them in their language, Portuguese. Danbury Public Schools has one of the highest percentages of ELL students in the state, 27.9% of students are ELL. Even so, there was never an interpreter or materials for my parents in their own language. During parent teacher conferences, I had to translate for my parents, when I was 9-10 years old. This is unacceptable, a child cannot be expected to serve as their parents interpreter and their own advocate. Parents need to be able to communicate and understand their child's education in their own language.

Access to quality education is a right all children should have regardless of the language they speak. Clear rights help our community know where they can turn for support and guidance. By guaranteeing parental rights in ELL students' education, children will improve in school; parents will be able to advocate for their child's needs and ensure they receive the best education.

I am in support of H.B. 6663 An Act Establishing the English Learner Bill of Rights. Please vote in favor.

Thank you,

Camila Bortolletto
Brookfield, CT